

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claims 1-20 (Canceled).

Claim 21 (Currently Amended): A process of producing a solar battery module comprising plural solar battery cells, said process comprising:

arranging plural solar battery cells at a prescribed interval and mutually connecting them to each other by a conductor;

arranging a first sealing resin sheet, substantially covering the entire surface of a transparent panel of a light reception surface side, between the transparent panel of the light reception surface side and the solar battery cells;

arranging a second sealing resin sheet, substantially covering the entire surface of a back face panel, between the back face panel and the solar battery cells;

arranging sealing resin sheet pieces having a thickness at least 0.2 mm thicker than that of the sum total value of the thickness of the solar battery cells and the thickness of the conductor at a space between the solar battery cells so as to be sandwiched by the first sealing resin sheet and the second sealing resin sheet;

applying a load by atmospheric pressure from both the front and back surfaces by discharging air between the transparent panel of the light reception surface side and the back face panel;

melting the first sealing resin sheet, the second sealing resin sheet, and the sealing resin sheet pieces by heating to form a molten sealing resin; and

cooling ~~the first sealing resin sheet, the second sealing resin sheet, and the sealing resin sheet pieces~~ the molten sealing resin to obtain plural solar battery cells sealed within the solar battery module;

wherein

the first sealing resin sheet, the second sealing resin sheet, and the sealing resin sheet pieces ~~independently~~ comprise at least one resin selected from the group consisting of ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, polyvinyl butyral, and polyurethane; ~~and~~

the transparent panel of the light reception surface side and the back face panel comprise a glass panel having a thickness of from 3 to 20 mm;

a single vacuum system in which the outside of a sealing treatment vessel is kept at atmospheric pressure is employed;

the sealing treatment vessel comprises a bag, the entirety of the bag being made of a gas non-permeable soft film;

the single vacuum system comprises plural bags arranged in a heating device; and
when the temperature rises, the resin is softened, the thickness of the sheet pieces to which a load has been applied is reduced, and the cells or the portion of the conductor connected to the cells is brought into contact with the upper and lower sealing resin sheets, and the cells or the conductor connected to the cells are brought into intimate contact with the softened sealing resin sheets such that the former is embedded in the latter.

Claims 22-23 (Canceled).

Claim 24 (Previously Presented): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 21, wherein the width of the sealing resin sheet pieces is narrower than the width of the space.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 24, wherein the width of the sealing resin sheet pieces is from 0.1 to 0.95 times the width of the space.

Claim 26 (Previously Presented): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 21, wherein a space is arranged between the sealing resin sheet pieces, and the internal air is discharged therethrough.

Claim 27 (Canceled).

Claim 28 (Previously Presented): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 21, wherein the sealing resin sheets are made of a crosslinkable thermoplastic resin; and in sealing in a sealing treatment vessel, the sealing operation including respective steps of a step of reducing the pressure in the sealing treatment vessel at a temperature at which the thermoplastic resin is not melted (step 1), a step of raising the temperature to the vicinity of or higher than the melting point of the thermoplastic resin in the

reduced-pressure state (step 2), a step of raising the pressure in the sealing treatment vessel (step 3), a step of raising the temperature to a temperature range where a crosslinking reaction proceeds, thereby proceeding with the crosslinking reaction (step 4), and a step of performing cooling (step 5) is carried out.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 21, wherein at least one of the transparent panel of the light reception surface side and the back face panel is made of a tempered glass or a double strength glass.

Claim 30 (Previously Presented): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 21, wherein the produced solar battery module is a daylighting type solar battery module.

Claim 31 (Withdrawn): A process of producing a solar battery module comprising a solar battery cell sealed by a resin between a transparent panel of a light reception surface side and a back face panel, wherein the sealing resin comprises a crosslinkable thermoplastic resin, comprising arranging a first sealing resin sheet substantially covering the entire surface of the transparent panel of the light reception surface side between the transparent panel of the light reception surface side and the solar battery cell and arranging a second sealing resin sheet substantially covering the entire surface of the back face panel between the back face panel and the solar battery cell forming an assembly which is then introduced into a sealing treatment vessel, and the sealing operation including respective steps of a step of reducing the pressure in the sealing treatment vessel at a temperature at which the thermoplastic resin is not melted (step 1); a step in which the temperature is raised to the vicinity of or higher than the melting point of the thermoplastic resin in the reduced-pressure state (step 2); a step in which the pressure in the sealing treatment vessel is raised (step 3); a step in which the temperature is raised to a temperature range where a crosslinking reaction proceeds, thereby proceeding with the crosslinking reaction (step 4); and a step in which cooling is performed (step 5) is carried out.

Claim 32 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 31, wherein in the step 1, the pressure is reduced to 0.01 MPa or lower.

Claim 33 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 31, wherein when the melting point of the thermoplastic resin is defined as T_m , the temperature as reached in the temperature-rising operation of the step 2 is $(T_m - 20)^\circ\text{C}$ or higher and $(T_m + 50)^\circ\text{C}$ or lower.

Claim 34 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 31, wherein in the step 3, the temperature at which the pressure is raised is 120°C or lower.

Claim 35 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 31, wherein in the step 3, the temperature rising is simultaneously carried out while raising the pressure in the sealing treatment vessel.

Claim 36 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 35, wherein in the step 3, a ratio of the pressure-rising rate (MPa/min) to the temperature-rising rate ($^\circ\text{C}/\text{min}$) is from 0.001 to 0.1 ($\text{MPa}/^\circ\text{C}$).

Claim 37 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 31, wherein in the step 3, the pressure in the sealing treatment vessel is raised, and cooling is then once performed; and in the step 4, the temperature is raised to a temperature range where the crosslinking reaction proceeds.

Claim 38 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 31, wherein in the step 4, the crosslinking reaction is made to proceed while keeping the pressure in the sealing treatment vessel at 0.05 MPa or more and the atmospheric pressure or lower.

Claim 39 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 31, wherein the solar battery module is a solar battery module including plural solar battery cells sealed by a resin, and the plural solar battery cells are arranged at a prescribed interval and mutually connected to each other by a conductor.

Claim 40 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 31, wherein the thermoplastic resin is at least one resin selected from the group consisting of an ethylene-vinyl acetate copolymer, polyvinyl butyral, and polyurethane.

Claim 41 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 31, wherein at least one of the transparent panel of the light reception surface side and the back face panel is made of a tempered glass or a double strength glass.

Claim 42 (Withdrawn): The process of producing a solar battery module according to claim 31, wherein the produced solar battery module is a daylighting type solar battery module.